

**SHOULD MENTORING BE INCLUDED IN SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR
THE CITY OF ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program

March 2007

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem was that the Rochester Fire Department (RFD) did not have a succession plan in place. Without proper succession planning in place the RFD is not preparing their new employees for future organizational success. The purpose of this study was to determine if a mentoring program should be included as part of succession planning in the RFD. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were:

1. What is mentoring?
2. Will mentoring help the RFD in preparing for the future?
3. What areas need to be addressed when implementing a mentoring program?
4. Should the RFD implement a mentoring program?

The procedures involved utilizing a feedback form and researching information on mentoring from various sources.

The results indicated that the RFD is not adequately grooming their new officers for future promotions and that a mentoring program would benefit new officers. Furthermore, a mentoring program may improve the moral of senior members of the RFD.

The recommendation, based on this study, is for the RFD to incorporate a mentoring program into succession planning. An ongoing evaluation of the program will need to be implemented to insure future success.

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Introduction

Fire Departments throughout the country are starting to lose the veteran leadership of their members in significant numbers. These members are going to take with them many years of firefighting experience and institutional knowledge. There are many reasons why senior members are leaving in substantial numbers. One obvious reason is that members, who were hired during the expansion years of the fire service, in the 1970s, are now reaching retirement age (Martinette, 2004, p. 83).

The Rochester Fire Department (RFD), in the very near future, will once again be undergoing extensive changes with turnover of personnel. The problem is that the RFD has no formal succession plan in place to develop our future company officers for their role as leaders. The purpose of this descriptive research project is to determine if a mentoring program should be a component of succession planning for the RFD. The research questions are:

1. What is mentoring?
2. Will mentoring help the RFD in preparing for the future?
3. What areas need to be addressed when implementing a mentoring program?
4. Should the RFD implement a mentoring program?

Background and Significance

The City of Rochester is located in upstate New York. The city is 36.44 square miles and has a population of 219,773. Like most northeast cities, the population in Rochester has been steadily decreasing over the last 40-50 years from a high of 332,000 residents back in 1950. With this steady decrease in population over the years there have

been significant changes in the configuration of the RFD. Back in the 1980's, the RFD radically changed the way fires were fought. The Department went from operating a truck and pumper in nine firehouses to operating a quint and midi in those nine firehouses. This operational change alone resulted in a decrease of nine Captains and 27 Lieutenants in one decade (Sam Pecorra, personal communication, November 9, 2006). During this decade there was a significant turnover of personnel.

Although it is true the RFD did not have a succession plan in place back then, the fire duty was so substantial that the newly appointed officers had plenty of firefighting experience before they became Lieutenants, Captains, and Battalion Chief's. Martinette (2004) wrote:

Some of the folks we are promoting these days don't have very much experience. Some of them may have only a few fires under their belt and their nozzle time is relegated to just a few room-and-content fires. In many cases, these newly promoted employees are getting experience at the same time as the recruits, and it is occurring in real time. I don't know about you, but that is a little scary. (p. 83)

This premise certainly holds true in Rochester where the Fire Department fought over 1216 structure fires in 1988. Today we are in the high 700's (Steve McClary personal communication, November 27, 2006).

Over the next two to five years it is anticipated that the Rochester Fire Department (RFD) will once again endure a significant changeover of personnel just like in the eighties. Every Battalion Chief will be eligible to retire in that time frame as well as 95% of the Captains and 85% of the Lieutenants. Although most firefighters in the RFD don't retire when they reach retirement age, that trend may change as retiree

benefits will surely come under attack during the next Collective Bargaining Agreement. With the potential to lose this many officers, it is imperative that the RFD plan for the future and prepare the next generation of officers for their roles as fire service leaders. This includes on the fire ground, in the firehouse, and community.

This Applied Research Project (ARP) relates to succession planning taught in the *Executive Leadership* course. Unit 7 of the course states:

Succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.

Succession planning is a critical element of organizational strategy.

Organizations with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Public safety organizations achieve excellence through a well-trained and competitive workforce.

(National Fire Academy [NFA], 2005, p. 7-3)

This research project ties directly into the United States Fire Administration operational objective to “reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters” (NFA, 2002, II-2), by preparing our future officers in their responsibilities as trainers, leaders, and fire ground commanders.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to set forth the practical foundation of this study. During this literature review process, various fire service trade magazines, books, technical reports and internet sites were explored. The information collected allowed for

a complete analysis of mentoring and the benefits along with concerns associated with this type program being implemented.

The first question that must be answered in this study is the definition of mentoring. Meston (1990) wrote “as defined by Webster’s New World Dictionary: Mentor, friend to Odysseus, a wise, loyal advisor. What does that conjure up? . . . working professional that will assist and guide the protégé through the good and bad times of his/her career” (p.26). Mentoring addresses the whole person and their career. Mentors not only concentrate on work related growth, but also the mentored persons’ inner selves. A mentor’s role may include role modeling, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, friendship, coaching, and exposure and visibility (Harvard Business Essentials [HBE], 2004, p.77). In the Officer Development handbook published by The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) they describe mentorship as:

A successful mentor guides and coaches you through your development experience and growth. The good mentor does not tell you what to do but rather gives you options, challenges you to see the big picture, encourages, identifies areas for improvement and helps you refine your skills. (IAFC, 2003, p.3)

Martinette (2004) further states that mentoring “is about providing new employees with someone who can help them negotiate the intricacies of the organizational culture. It is about ensuring that deeply held values are passed from generation to generation and maintained as part of the organizations culture” (p. 88).

To properly define what mentoring is, one must also look at what mentoring is not. Mentors are not the ones doing the training of the employee. They are not the

trainees advocate and should not interfere with the training process. A mentor can not be the protégés savior, foster parent, parole officer, or cool peer (Baylis, 2003).

A second question that must be addressed when implementing any new program is whether or not the program will benefit the organization. If the RFD is to prepare for the future, will mentoring help with succession planning? If the department doesn't want their new officers to learn by trial and error, then they must find a way to impart past experiences through education. This education can come through formal means (classes) or through the shared experiences others have encountered.

As previously stated, fire departments around the country, including the RFD, are experiencing fewer fires. The people we are promoting are younger and more educated, but arguably with no significant fire experience. Some newly promoted officers have had only a few room -and - content fires under their belts while they were on the nozzle. In most cases, these officers are getting their experience at the same time as recruit firefighters (Martinette, 2004). This type of on the job training is not the best way to protect and teach our new officers. Over the years we respond to many emergency incidents that have similar circumstances and outcomes. Mentoring will give the new officer an informal opportunity to seek advice and feedback on how they handled actual emergency incidents that in all likelihood the mentor has seen many times over.

A formal mentoring program can increase productivity and enhance communications between all levels and divisions of an organization. A protégé may help the mentor in finishing organizational projects that benefit the organization. The mentor in turn, helps the protégé and organization by building a sense of belonging. This process can also help integrate the protégé in how the organization is run. Mentoring allows the

protégé to gain insight into what the job entails and helps disprove the fallacy that the “grass is greener on the other side of the fence” (Meston, 1990). By mentoring our new officers, we share the organizational values and visions with those who will lead in the future.

An organization such as the fire service must realize that it takes years to develop an individual into a competent fire ground manager. When the Government Accounting Office did a study on how long it takes to train an upper level employee to become competent in incident response, they found the time frame to be somewhere between 17 to 20 years (Borzik, 2004). Most of the time the fire service does not have the luxury of waiting this long before someone is thrust into managing an emergency incident. By developing a mentoring program, an individual may learn faster through the experience and knowledge of their senior officers.

There are many areas that must be addressed before a mentoring program can be initiated. The organization must decide who the mentors are going to be, how the program will be managed, and an upfront realization of what the program involves.

The first task is to figure out who your mentors are going to be. Some considerations would be; whether or not the potential mentor believes in the program, is the mentor dedicated to the organization, is the mentor knowledgeable in the workings of the department, and does he/she have practical experiences serving in busy fire stations as firefighters and officers. Furthermore, your chosen mentors must have a good attitude, dress appropriately, be able to interact skillfully with both department members and civilians, and possess high-quality report writing skills (Lewis, 2001).

Mentors must also be confidants. Employees need to be able to speak freely and share their dreams and fears. Trust is at the cornerstone of all mentoring. A successful approach builds upon three components. These components are mutual trust and commitment, patient leadership, and emotional maturity (Pollick, 2002). Without proper selection of mentors, the succession planning of a department will most likely fail.

How does an organization best pair up mentors with mentees? The first step is to have the mentee decide on who they would like as a mentor. The mentee knows what they need to learn and who in the organization has that knowledge. The next step is to see if the mentor chosen has any desire to be a mentor. Do they have the time, commitment, and interest in this type of program?

Before a protégé and mentor are assigned together many issues will need to be dealt with. Mutual respect between both parties is essential. The mentor should respect the mentee for his/her willingness to learn, while the protégé should respect the mentor for his/her knowledge and accomplishments. There must be a logical fit of both parties. An organization would not want to pair a staff officer as a mentor with a career line officer, because they both have different job duties and require different skill sets. The mentor and mentee should also have compatible temperaments or styles. They should both be committed to the process (HBE, 2004, p. 88).

Before a mentoring program is to commence, everyone in the organization, including upper management, needs to know what the total commitment involves. Mentoring is not cost free. It takes time from employees work day, time that could be spent on budget, planning, or customer service. Although most employers have found

this “cost” to be a great investment in the company, the program needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis (HBE, 2004, p. 84).

A new program should not begin without standardized training for each new mentor. The mentors and protégés should be given forms which could include daily observation, topics for study, and feedback forms to document progress over a specified period of time (Lewis, 2001). Both the mentor and the protégé must know what is expected of them.

It may also be a good idea to administer the program in phases, with different mentors working with a mentee over the course of time. One reason for this is so that no one mentor is overwhelmed with all the new material. A second reason is that this gives the protégé a chance to be mentored by more than one person. This may help in the event the mentor and protégé did not have the same goals, or there are personality conflicts (Lewis, 2001, p. 66).

Another integral part of the mentoring process is how the mentor/protégé relationship ends. It is likely that during the mentoring process strong emotional ties will develop between the parties. It is recommended that a formal adjournment be considered so that both parties can move on to the next step in their careers. The last formal meeting between the parties may involve going out to lunch or socializing after work. This meeting should not include any last minute advice, but merely the mentor’s good wishes and blessing. The mentor should send the protégé off with self confidence and compassion (Bell, 2000, p.56).

The last part of the mentoring program must include an evaluation process. One of the most cost effective instruments to measure evaluation might include an online form

that mentors and mentees can fill out biannually. This type of data collection would most likely be very cost effective (Borzik, 2004, p. 48). In order for an evaluation process to be comprehensive, all parties need to participate.

When deciding if the RFD should implement a mentoring program, one must again look at the potential benefits of such a program. Mentoring can be beneficial for the organization as a whole. It forces the mentor to practice what is preached. The mentor may evaluate his/her own performance more closely. The mentor must learn to sharpen his/her interpersonal skills. These skills afford them the opportunity to learn how to criticize without harming, to complement effectively, and to bring about positive change in another through actions and words. Another benefit for the organization is that if the protégé is encouraged to act independently, take on more responsibility through sound decision making and good judgment, upper management will not have to address every issue and solve them. The protégé will deal with the problem at a lower level. In this type of situation the organization, the mentor, and the protégé all win, it is a win-win-win situation (Hagstrom, 2001, p. 24).

One last enormous benefit of a mentoring program is that it helps keep senior members interested in the job. No one likes to feel that their time has come and gone, and that they no longer have any value to the organization. Martinette (2004) wrote:

Many of the senior employees are distraught because leaders have failed to demonstrate to them their value to the organization. This situation happens in many cases because we leaders recognize that the future and the long-term success of the organization rest with the younger employees. Consequently, we spend our time trying to develop them. What do you think that says to the long-

term employee? Perhaps something like, “You don’t care about my feelings” or “Why should I engage when it is only about the young guys?” (p.84)

In summary, it appears that many areas need to be addressed if a mentoring program is to begin. Formal training on the program would be essential. Everyone involved would need to know up front what is expected of them, including the time commitment that is required. The decision on who the department’s mentors are going to be would go a long way in determining whether or not the program succeeds. The Department would have to carefully choose members who are well respected, thoroughly know the inner workings of the Department, and who have a grasp of the verbal and written skills needed to assist others.

Because the fire service is experiencing fewer structure fires, the days of on the job training are gone. Fire Departments will be forced to find new ways to impart fire ground knowledge to our junior officers. Sharing lessons learned of past emergency incidents may help our junior officers in acquiring this knowledge before they actually are faced with life and death decisions. While there is no replacement for first hand experience, the fire service cannot afford to take the chance that everything will work well as junior officers learn through trial and error. Mentoring may give our junior officers the edge they need to be successful. Mentoring may also give the senior members a renewed sense of belonging which will surely benefit the organization.

If a mentoring program is established there would need to be an evaluation process. This type of evaluation will help determine if the mentor and protégé were compatible, if the program is worthwhile and should be continued, and what changes need to be made to make the program stronger.

Procedures

For this descriptive research project two processes were undertaken. First, several publications were reviewed, along with the internet and personal communication to gain an understanding of mentoring as a whole and how it may help the RFD in future succession planning. Secondly, two feedback forms were developed to gather the current opinions of RFD personnel with regards to a mentoring program being implemented.

Feedback Form

Two feedback forms (Appendices A & B) were developed to answer research questions two, three, and four. Research question one was answered through the literature review process and a simple definition was included in each feedback form to standardize the description of mentoring for those members who participated in the study.

The Chief Officer feedback form (Appendix A) was sent to all chief officers in the RFD. The Junior Officer feedback form (Appendix B) was sent to all officers, of every rank, who were promoted over the last year and also to those members in the top five percent of each current promotional list in the RFD. The feedback forms were mailed through interdepartmental mail with a self addressed envelope included so the results could be mailed directly back to the researcher. The mailings were prepared to ensure that all responses were anonymous.

The feedback forms were developed for this study by the researcher and were reviewed by three Captains, who have held that rank for over two years, for clarity of content. These three Captains did not receive a feedback form as part of the study. The questions in the feedback form were derived from the literature review. Each question

was designed to help answer the study question: should mentoring be included as a part of succession planning for the RFD.

Population

The Chief Officer feedback form (Appendix A) was mailed to all current Battalion Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs in the RFD. There are currently two Deputy Chiefs and 17 Battalion Chiefs in the RFD out of 515 uniformed members. A total of 19 forms were mailed out. Battalion Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs were chosen for the first part of this study because they observe on a day to day basis the challenges new officers and acting officers face. These command positions are responsible for the overall efficient operation of the RFD.

The Junior Officer feedback form (Appendix B) was mailed to seven newly appointed officers who have been promoted over the last year. These newly appointed officers included six Lieutenants, and one Captain. Ten members of the RFD who are currently in the top five percent of each promotional list also received the feedback form. These members included five firefighters who are on the Lieutenants List, three Lieutenants on the Captains list, and two Captains on the Battalion chiefs list. These ten members are given opportunity to act out of title in the rank they may be promoted to. The ten members along with those promoted over the last year have first hand knowledge of the difficulties they face on a day to day basis, and should recognize if a mentoring program would be beneficial to them and the RFD as a whole. A total of 17 forms were mailed out.

Limitations and Assumptions

This research was limited by the fact that each participant may not have a similar understanding of what mentoring is. Although a simple definition was supplied, each participant may have already formed an opinion of their own prior to this feedback form.

Another limitation is that some members may have been fortunate enough to have had a previous supervisor who, in an informal sense, was an excellent mentor and therefore they feel that is how the whole department operates. A member's answers will surely reflect their personal job growth experiences.

Finally it is assumed that the respondents answered honestly.

Definition of Terms

Acting out of title- when a member is allowed to perform, on a short term basis, as an officer in the next highest rank, without permanent appointment.

Chief Officers- those members of the department who have been promoted to either Battalion Chief or Deputy Chief.

Promotional Lists-a numerical chronological list established by test scores. These lists last three years and are determined by a state given written test.

Protégé- "a person guided and helped in his or her career by another person" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003).

Junior Officers- those officers who have been promoted within the last year or two.

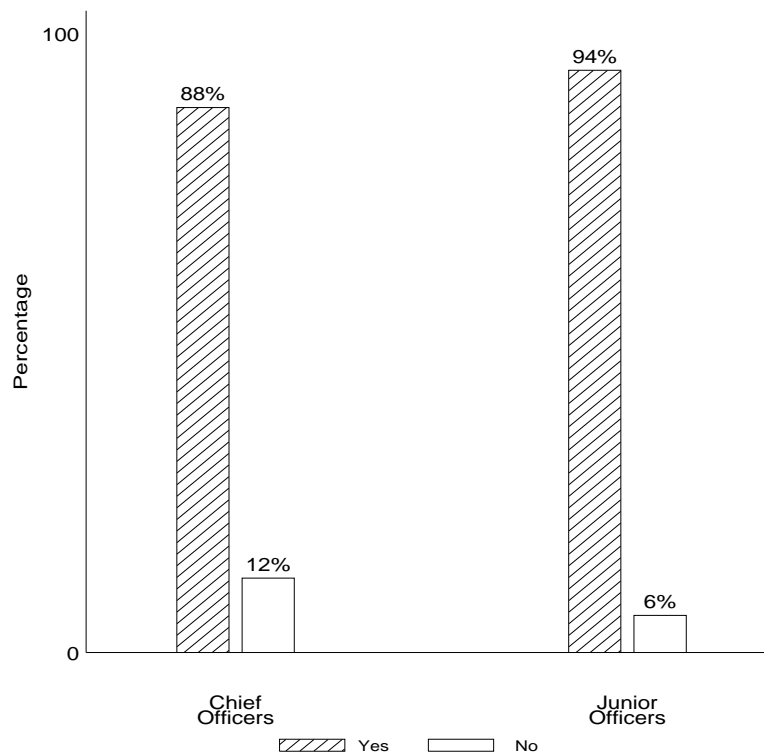
Descriptive statistics were used to calculate and interpret the data generated from the feedback form. The raw numbers and percentages are reported.

Results

Seventeen (90%) of the feedback forms sent to Chief Officers (Appendix A) were returned. All Junior Officer (Appendix B) feedback forms, seventeen, were returned. Both feedback forms were used to answer research questions two, three, and four. Research question one was answered through the literature review and summarized as part of both feedback forms. For the purposes of this study, those respondents who answered feedback form (Appendix B) will be classified as Junior Officers.

Sixteen (94%) Chief Officers and fourteen (82%) Junior Officers think new officers are not getting enough fire ground experience prior to their promotion. 28 (82%) of all respondents felt new officers do not have a solid grasp of what is expected of them in the firehouse, while 30 (88%) of all respondents did not feel new officers have a solid grasp of what is expected of them when dealing with the community. 100% of respondents believe that an informal mentoring meeting between a Junior Officer and a Senior Officer would benefit the Junior Officer. 88% of Chief Officers and 94% of Junior Officers think a properly managed mentoring program would help the RFD in preparing for the future (Figure 1). A few respondents, 12% of Chief Officers and 6% of Junior Officers, believe the RFD is already doing a good job mentoring our new officers.

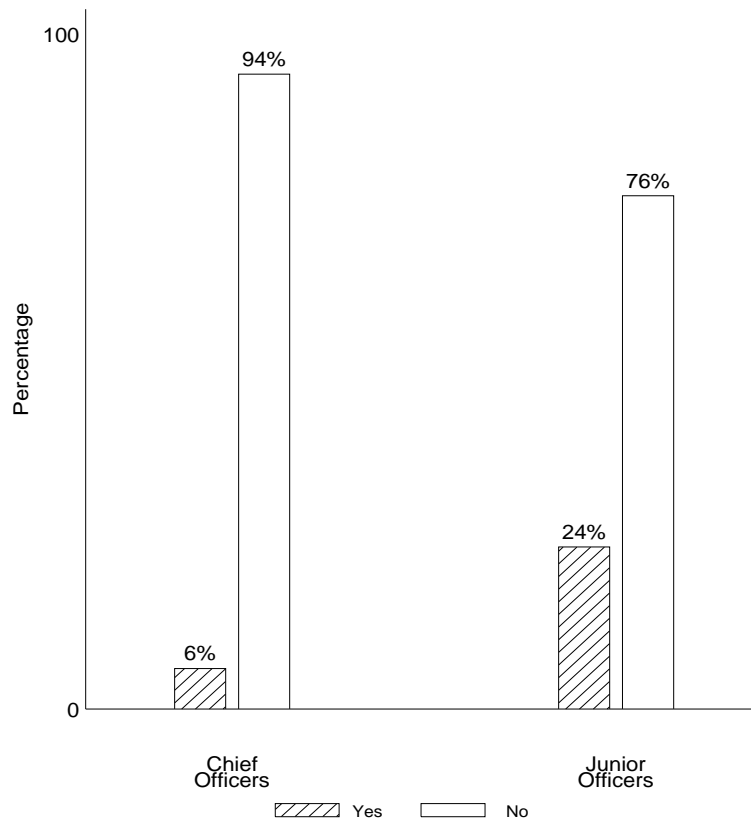
Figure 1: Will a Mentoring Program Help the RFD in Preparing for the Future?



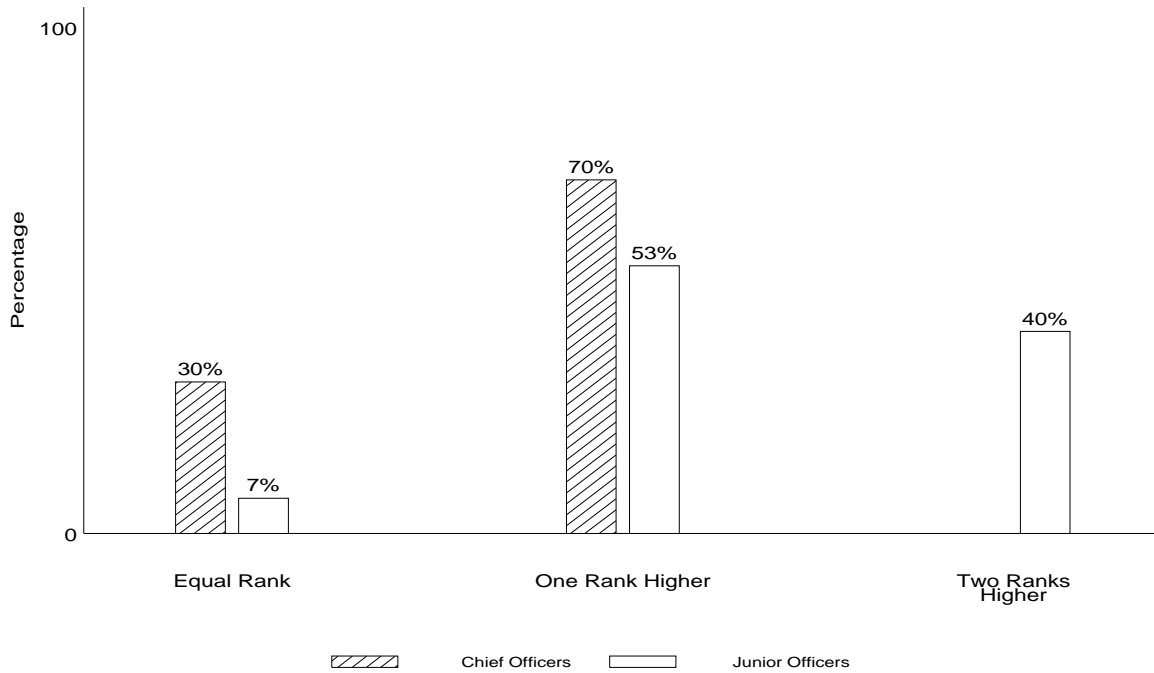
When the respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a mentoring program, 100% of the Junior Officers and 88% of Chief Officers answered yes. Nine (60%) Chief Officers and six (35%) Junior Officers feel two hours per week would be a desirable amount of time for a mentoring meeting. The reverse was true with regards to a one hour meeting. 34% of the Chief Officers and 65% of the Junior Officers felt one hour would be the appropriate amount of time.

All respondents were asked if they feel the RFD is adequately preparing our new officers as future leaders in the RFD. 16 (94%) of the Chief Officers and 14 (76%) of the Junior Officers answered no (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Is the RFD Adequately Preparing its Officers for the Future?

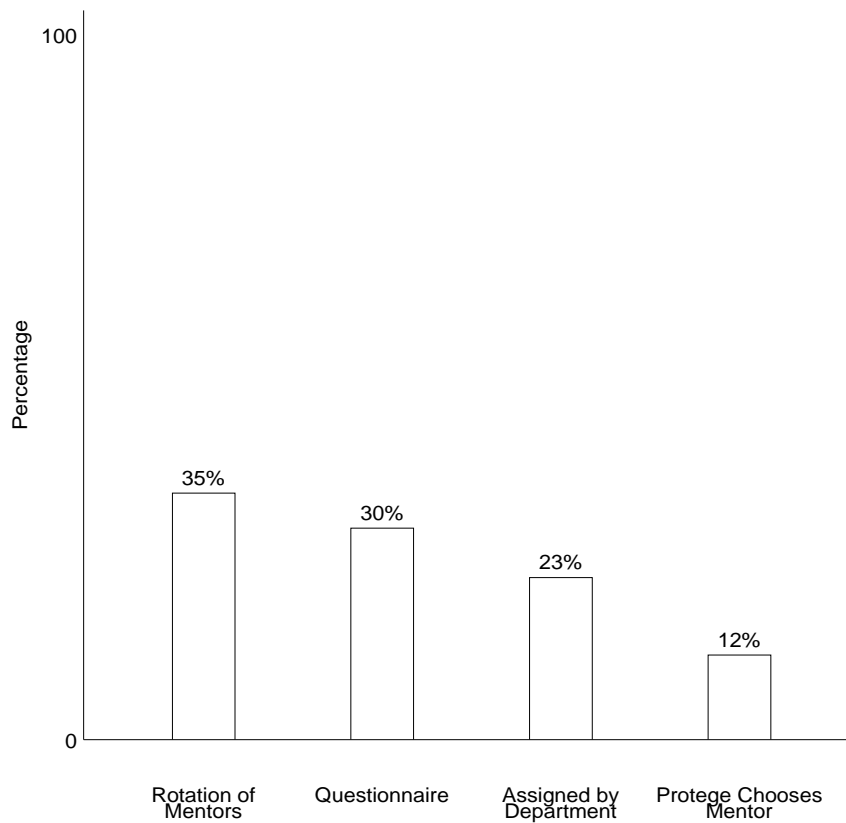


The majority of respondents felt a mentor should be a person who is one rank higher than the protégé, 70% and 53% of Chief Officers and Junior Officers respectively. None of the Chief Officers felt that the mentor should be a person two ranks higher, while 6 (40%) of the Junior Officer respondents felt it should be a person two ranks higher. 30% of the Chief Officers and 7% of the Junior Officers felt that the mentor should be a person of equal rank (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Who Should a Mentor be?

The Junior Officer respondents were asked how a mentor/ protégé should be matched up. Six (35%) felt a rotation of mentors would be best, five (30%) felt a questionnaire completed by the mentor and mentee should decide the match up, two (12%) thought the department should assign the mentor, and four (23%) believe the protégé should choose the mentor (Figure 4). Furthermore, each Junior Officer was asked if there was a Senior Member of the RFD that they would like to have as a mentor. All respondents (100%) answered yes.

Figure 4: How should a Mentor and Protégé be Matched up?



The last two questions asked of the Chief Officers regarded their attitude towards the Department, and if they would have liked to have had a mentor during their career. 12 (70%) of the Chief Officers felt the RFD had neglected their thoughts and opinions. 16 (94%) of the Chief respondents also felt that they could have benefited from a mentoring program during their career.

Discussion

The results indicate that the majority of respondents believe a formal mentoring program would benefit newly appointed and acting officers in the RFD. It is believed that over the next few years, the RFD will undergo a change over of senior personnel. One significant downside to this transformation is a loss of knowledge and experience. Mentoring is about “providing new employees with someone who can help them negotiate the intricacies of the organizational culture. It is about ensuring that deeply held values are passed from generation to generation and maintained as part of the organizational culture” (Martinette, 2004). When the respondents were asked if the RFD is adequately preparing our new officers for their future roles as leaders, 94% of the Chief Officers and 76% of the Junior Officers answered no. Mentoring may be one method to help in this preparation. If the RFD continues to do nothing in preparing our new officers, then most of the traditions and values of the RFD may be lost. The RFD did not become a great department over the past two years. It took many years and sacrifices from those who served before us to make this happen.

Succession planning entails making sure the next generation is ready to tackle the needs of the organization. When all respondents were asked if they feel new officers have an understanding of what is expected of them in the firehouse and community, collectively 82% and 88% correspondingly answered no. Mentoring increases and enhances communication between all levels and divisions of the organization. It builds a sense of belonging and integrates the protégé in how the organization is run (Meston, 1990). Mentoring should help newly appointed officers grasp a solid comprehension of what their responsibilities involve regarding both the firehouse and community. If the

department does not instill a sense of what the organizational goals and expectations are it is left to each new officer to make that interpretation on their own. When new officers are left to their own devices, freelancing and inconsistency may develop.

The most important function of a new officer is fire ground management. A properly run fire scene enhances citizen and firefighter safety. 94% of Chief Officers and 82% of Junior Officers feel fire ground experience is lacking prior to the promotion of new officers in the RFD. Martinette (2004) wrote some newly promoted officers have had only a few room-and-content fires under their belts while they were on the nozzle. In most cases, these officers are getting their experience at the same time as recruit firefighters. Given that the RFD is experiencing fewer fires, fire ground knowledge must be gained through means other than first hand knowledge. Furthermore, according to the Government Accounting Office it takes between 17 to 20 years to train an upper level employee to become competent in incident response (Borzik, 2004).

All respondents believe an informal mentoring meeting between a Junior Officer and Senior Officer would benefit the Junior Officer. During these meetings the Junior Officer would gather important information and feedback that would help in making critical fire ground decisions. In fact, 94% of the Senior Officers felt they would have benefited from a mentoring program during their career. As fires decrease in the City of Rochester we must develop new methods to teach and train our new officers to become competent fire ground managers.

Many areas need to be addressed prior to implementing a mentoring program. Mentoring takes time from the employees work day. This is time that could be spent on budget, planning, and customer service (HBE, 2004). When the respondents were asked

if they would be willing to participate in a mentoring program, 100% of the Junior Officers and 88% of the Chief Officers responded yes. Moreover, most Chief Officers (60%) were willing to dedicate two hours a week to this type of program, while the majority of Junior Officers (65%) were willing to dedicate one hour to the program. Just like every business in America, the RFD is constantly doing more with less. A two hour per week commitment from the Chief Officers seems to indicate their belief in the need for this type of program.

Another area that would need to be addressed is how a mentoring program assigns mentors and protégés. A successful approach builds on three components. These are mutual trust and commitment, patient leadership, and emotional maturity (Pollick, 2002). 100% of Junior Officer knew of a Senior Officer on the RFD that they would like to have as mentor. This indicates that the RFD has senior members in place that junior members trust and admire.

Lewis (2001) feels it is a good idea to administer a mentoring program in phases. This involves different mentors for a mentee at different times in the process. A good reason for this is that it gives the protégé a chance to be mentored by more than one person. This helps in the event that the mentor and protégé do not have the same goals, or if there are personality conflicts. 35% of the Junior Officers who responded felt a rotation of mentors would be best. 30% felt commonalities from answers through a questionnaire should be used to match participants. Therefore, the majority of Junior Officers agreed with Lewis that using a rotation between mentors and protégés is the best way to administer the program.

Mutual respect is essential when assigning mentors to protégés. The mentor should respect the protégé for his/her willingness to learn, while the protégé should respect the mentor for his/her knowledge and accomplishments (HBE, 2004). Although it is a widely held belief that actions, not rank, garner respect, it is also assumed that the majority of those in higher rank have some prior experience and knowledge that could be passed on. This was evident in the results when the majority of respondents felt a mentor should be a person one rank higher. Interestingly, no Chief Officer felt a mentor should be two ranks higher, while 40% of the Junior Officers felt this would be fitting. This may come from the fact that a mentor two ranks higher for Chief Officers would mean the Fire Chief himself and there would only be one mentor to choose from.

Mentoring can help an organization in more ways than one. Mentoring may keep senior officers interested in their job and bring a new sense of belonging. Being a mentor will help validate, to the mentor, the importance these senior members have to the organization (Martinette, 2004). Twelve (70%) of the Chief Officer respondents feel that the RFD has neglected their thoughts and opinions. Mentoring may bring these Chief Officers back into the mix giving them an understanding that they are vital the success of the RFD, and that their thoughts and opinions will help in shaping where the organization is headed.

Mentoring can also help the RFD by teaching the mentors themselves self-awareness. The mentors must practice what they preach. They must sharpen their interpersonal skills, and learn how to evaluate their own performance more closely (Hagstgrom, 2001). 88% of the Chief Officers and 94% of the Junior Officers feel a properly managed mentoring program would help the RFD in preparing for the future. In

this respect, the RFD would not only be preparing for the future, but would be strengthening senior members at the same time. All respondents believe an informal mentoring program between a Senior Officer and Junior Officer would benefit the Junior Officer. This clearly demonstrates some type of mentoring program is needed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the RFD should adopt a mentoring program of some type. The RFD has the potential of losing several, if not all, of their Senior Officers over the next two years. In order to have a smooth transition during this potential change over, a succession plan must be in place. Mentoring should be included as part of this plan. A mentoring program could begin as an informal program and be expanded upon over time to evolve into a formal program. Study data shows the RFD is not developing their new officers for their future roles as fire service leaders. Our new officers are not aware of what the RFD expects of them in the firehouse and more importantly in the community. Succession planning through mentoring should give them that knowledge.

Another critical component that needs to be passed down to new officers in the RFD is fire ground management. Like most fire departments around the country, the RFD is seeing a decrease in our structural fire duty. With all the other responsibilities and community service the RFD has undertaken over the years, actual fire fighting still must remain our first priority. We must make sure we remain proficient in this role to protect the citizens and the fire fighters themselves. Development of a mentoring program in the RFD will help in the passing of this knowledge.

A mentoring program may also benefit the RFD by keeping Senior Officers involved in the organization. By including Senior Officers in a mentoring program, the

RFD is not only planning for the future, but is keeping these senior members engaged, and demonstrating to them their importance.

If the RFD decides to undertake a mentoring program, there must be a realization from the top down of the time commitment that is involved. There will need to be time devoted to the development of the program, instructing mentors and protégés about the program, actual mentoring time, and an evaluation period. The RFD should realize that a one to two hour commitment will be needed each week just for the meetings between mentors and protégés. If the program is properly managed, this time commitment should be time well invested.

If fire departments anticipate a transition in personnel it is imperative that they have a succession plan in place to ensure they are preparing their future fire service leaders. Mentoring may be one area that could be included in this type of preparation. Each department must look at their personnel and decide who their mentors will be, the time commitment that is involved, and how mentors and protégés will be matched up. The last essential part of any program is an evaluation component. The evaluation process will allow departments to add and subtract components from their mentoring program which will give the program a greater chance of long term success.

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Appendix (A)

Dear Chief:

This feedback form is part of my Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project. Responding to all questions is voluntary and confidential. This project concerns mentoring and whether or not we are properly preparing our junior officers for their future roles as leaders of this department. Thank you for your assistance with this project. Darryl Winter.

Please base your answers on the following simple definition of mentoring:

A mentor is a senior officer who is well respected, knowledgeable in the workings of the department and has practical experience. A good mentor does not tell the protégé (newly appointed) what to do. A mentor does not do the actual training of the employee, but rather gives the protégé options, challenges him/her to see the big picture, and helps refine skills.

1) Do you feel our new officers (all ranks) are getting enough fire ground experience prior to their promotion?

Yes

No

2) Do you feel our new officers (all ranks) have a solid grasp of what is expected of them?

A) In the firehouse

Yes

No

B) In the community

Yes

No

3) Do you feel that an informal meeting with a newly promoted officer on a weekly basis to discuss new role challenges would benefit that officer?

Yes

No

4) Would you be willing to become a mentor for a newly appointed officer?

Yes

No

5) If yes how many hours per week would you be willing to dedicate as a mentor?

A) 1

B) 2

C) 3

D) 4

6) In your opinion, a mentor should be;

A) A person of equal rank

B) A person one rank higher

C) A person two ranks higher

7) Do you feel, as a Chief, that the department has neglected your thoughts and opinions?

Yes

No

8) Do you feel we adequately prepare our new officers for their roles as leaders?

Yes

No

9) Do you feel you could have benefited from having a competent mentor during your career?

Yes

No

10) Please circle the answer that you feel best describes your feelings

A) A mentoring program, properly managed, would help the department prepare for the future.

B) A mentoring program is a waste of time.

C) The Rochester Fire Department already does a good job mentoring our new officers.

4) In your opinion a mentor should be

- A) A person of equal rank
- B) A person one rank higher
- C) A person two ranks higher

5) Do you feel the department has or is adequately preparing you for your role as a future leader in this department?

	Yes	No

6) Would you be willing to participate in a mentoring program?

Yes No

7) How many hours per week do you feel a mentoring program would benefit you?

- A) 1 b) 2 C) 3 D) 4

8) Is there any senior officer on this job that you would like to have as a mentor?

Yes No

9) Which of the following answers do you feel is best?

- A) The protégé should be allowed to choose their mentor
- B) A new officer or actor should be assigned a mentor by the department
- C) A new officer or actor should be assigned a mentor based on a rotation of mentors
- D) A questionnaire should be sent out, and a mentor/protégé match up would be decided by their answers.

10) Please circle the answer that you feel best describes your feelings

- A) A mentoring program, properly managed, would help the department prepare for the future.
- B) A mentoring program is a waste of time.
- C) The RFD already does a good job mentoring our new officers.